Marauders of the Azure Main (Part Three)

Andrew Wright

Sir,

This is my third scroll to you from our expedition to the Azure Coast and concerns the second and only other major port in the area[1], **the settlement of Banar**. Unlike Gatina, Banar is not situated on the continent of Mungoda, but instead offshore, **on the isle of Kabir**, largest and eastern-most of a small archipelago[2] strung along the westerly reaches of the Azure Coast[3]. Located at the base of a bluff overlooking a scrubby delta, **the docks** of the port are **easy to access**, **leaning starboard** to avoid the sandbars on the mangrove fringes, and well-lit at night by a **lighthouse**[4]

In marked contrast to Gatina, Banar has **two distinct halves**, split by the mouth of the **Muhila creek**. On the **eastern side** is the **old quarter**, a walled hilly town of stone houses and streets that wind from the docks up to the **Garrison** and the **palace of the Emira**. On the **western side** is the tidal estuary of the Muhila, a thicket of **mangroves** encroached upon by a **shanty-town** of wooden lean-tos, shacks and huts, all on stilts with walkways between major groups of hovels. Despite its scruffy appearance and apparent poverty, no one in either half of Banar appears keen to improve their lot. **An air of lethargic apathy** pervades the settlement, a perplexingly fatalistic sense of weariness and ennui.

There are elements of **stone** scavenged from classical sites and used for construction, but whether they were **Kaikuhuran, Emphidian or**

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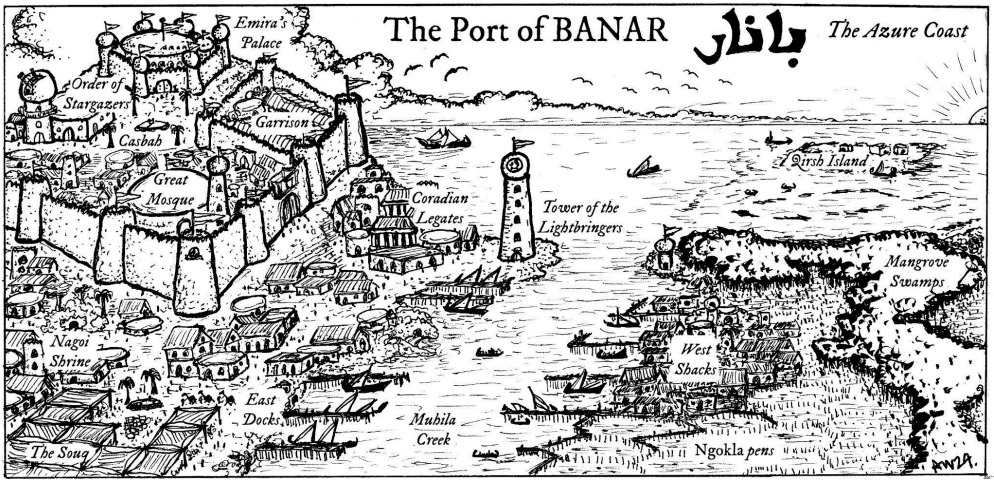
[1] Though there is reputed to be the small Algandian outpost of Mariana further west.

[2] And are haven to naught but pirates, tortoises and big scaly lizards.

[3] In local legend, the islands are a family of Marid giants turned to stone by either a Gorgon or an early Storm Wizard, accounts vary. The island names in the regional dialect are: Kabir ("Big brother"), Saghir ("Small Brother"), Yahmi ("The Guard"), and the Three Sisters: Wahd ("One"), Itnyn ("Two"), and T'latha ("Three").

[4] Manned by a local cadre of Storm Wizards known as the Lightbringers (key catechism: "The sun is white, the land is white, the sky and sea are blue").

Selentine in origin, I could not tell. Some locals claim **a ruined temple** with similar stonework can be found inland, near the **source of Muhila creek**. **Baboons** and **hyenas** apparently scavenge refuse beyond the walls of Banar, while Kabiri **nomads** graze their herds outside the city.



Banar is ruled by the self-styled **'Emira' Qalida Albakki**, who currently has cobbled together enough support from nearby tribes and a garrison of **Marazidi troops** that is really little more than a mercenary band[5]. The Emira has converted to the **Ta'ashim** faith, which has created a **schism** between herself and the **local orders of Storm Wizards** (who, backed by the island tribes, have become a second faction). Into this tense situation have arrived foreigners, **noble houses** from **Algandy** and **Ferromaine** keen on trade and profits, with some wayward crusaders and missionaries.

Moreso than Gatina, Banar is beset with **paranoid intrigue** of a measure I previously can only recall from Crescentium, though on a smaller scale. As well as the **tension** between the **Emira** and her **Marazidi advisors** on one side, and the **Storm Wizard sects** and **nomads** on the other, plenty of additional conflict abides. There are typical rumours of **Knights Capellars**, **Marijah assassins**, and even **Kappa** infiltrators, all involved in various conspiracies, while the catacomb-like **sewers** beneath Banar are

[5] The flag and seal of Banar are an azure band across a white field.

said to be home to a colony of **Blood Fiends**[6]. (Or perhaps there is another reason for the savaged corpses of random people that wash into the harbour at the sound of the morning prayer?)

Other factions include **traders in lotus leaf**, apparently grown in the island uplands, who wield appreciable power, and two cabals of **Storm Wizards**, the **Lightbringers** and the **Stargazers**[7]. Worse, rumours report one of these orders has been infiltrated by the **Eye of Iblis**, a mysterious rogue sect[8]. There is much trade with **desert nomads** at the camp on the opposite shore, particularly in **rhinoceros horn**, while the **local nobility** of Banar comprise a mix of **sedentary nomad chiefs** and **retired pirates** from the Three Sisters. Meanwhile, the mangrove **shanty town** on the other side of the river is home to a seething stew of **Algandian scavengers**, **sea nomad camps**, and ***Ngokla***[9] **farmers**, whose enclosures are used by other factions to dispose of the occasional dead body.

Sir, to be blunt, we are in trouble. Our **cargo was confiscated** upon arrival by zealous customs guards of the Emira, and we are currently stalled in port, awaiting an idea of the amount of duty required to release said cargo. Funds are light as the sailors need pay, especially out here on the edges of the world, and so we have approached the **lotus leaf traders**, who double as **moneylenders**, for support. The next scroll should hopefully better appraise you of **our current situation**.

Your trusted and esteemed colleague,

Kanthos Viliades, Captain and Attaché of the *Wanderer's Regret*

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[6] See *Casket of Fays*, issue #5, p. 45.

[7] Key catechism: "The Tower is the Land".

[8] Of Darkness Elementalists.

[9] See *Casket of Fays*, issue #2, p. 18.

The Port of BANAR

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There are elements of ***stone*** *scavenged from classical sites and used for construction, but whether they were* ***Kaikuhuran, Emphidian or Selentine*** *in origin, I could not tell. Some locals claim* ***a ruined temple*** *with similar stonework can be found inland, near the* ***source of Muhila creek****.* ***Baboons*** *and* ***hyenas*** *apparently scavenge refuse beyond the walls of Banar, while Kabiri* ***nomads*** *graze their herds outside the city.*

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